

# JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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ONE

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THE CHURCH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OF THE N.C.C.

## Curriculum Conference

On November 9-11 at Kutsukake, Karuizawa, a meeting of thirty Japanese church workers and twenty missionaries discussed the present and future curriculum of Christian Education in Japanese churches. It will be remembered that in 1951 by the help of Mrs. Emily Shacklock and others, a three year cycle system was set up which the Kyodan and Lutheran churches used directly and which influenced the curriculum of the Nazarene, Southern Baptist, Salvation Army and Episcopal churches. However, difficulties have been found this curriculum hard to adopt to rural or small churches, too American and not indigenous enough, or that the content was too much centered in life situations taking for granted a Biblical background in the students which did not exist.

Thus, taking advantage of the fact that Dr. Paul Vieth of Yale Divinity School is studying in Japan as a Fulbright Scholar this fall and could meet with the group, the conference was called to re-evaluate and plan for the future. Although there was some feeling that a "Uniform" curriculum which would unite the whole Sunday School in the study of one Bible theme at once would be both Bible centered and would meet the needs of the crowded facilities of the small churches in Japan, the decision was that a so called "Unified" plan would be best. A Unified plan would seek to carry through an over all theme for the whole Church School while trying to express the meaning of Christ through Bible content and life experiences applicable to the different age groups. Dr. Vieth helped to clarify the fact that there should be no exclusive conflict between "Bible Centered" as contrasted to "Life Centered" material. The Bible is the record of God working in history and in the lives of people. Thus the record of the action of God and the way it applies to our present day lives are both equally indispensable to Religious Education.

For the next two years, the curriculum committees of the member denominations will carry on research 1) The psychology of age groups. 2) The Social trends in Japan, 3) The particular parts and passages of the Bible which are most applicable to particular age groups.





There will be a half year report in November of 1955 to report the results of this study. The resulting new curriculum is scheduled to appear in 1957.

Dr. Vieth also made the two helpful suggestions that there should be some leadership training courses for the Sunday School teachers and that there should be some training system for the writers of curriculum. As a result of the second suggestion, there will be a meeting of curriculum writers in Tokyo on this next January 5-7.

### Convocation of the World Sunday School Association

The Church School Department of the N.C.C. will be the host to the World Convocation in 1958. Mr. J.M. Fujita announces that looking forward to this Convocation there will be an all Japan Sunday School Convention each year until then in order to help the Japanese Sunday School members to catch the spirit of ecumenicity and the thrill of being a part of the world wide Church, and in order to help raise \$30,000 to pay for the expenses of the World Convocation.

The first of these annual meetings will be in Kyoto, next May 3-5.

### Christian Education Week

Under the sponsorship of the Church School Department of the N.C.C. a Christian Education week was observed all over Japan September 20-27. Part of the result was the raising of \$800 to purchase copies of the new vernacular translation of the New Testament which will be distributed among the residents of homes for juvenile delinquents. About 20,000 copies will be purchased with this money.

## JAPAN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

### Teachers of Christian Schools Meet

At the annual Conference of Teachers in Christian Schools held last summer in Gotemba (see JCAN of Sept 1, 1954) the feeling was that more teachers should have the privilege of discussing the same problems so it was recommended that the four main areas of Japan (Tohoku-northern, Kanto-around Tokyo, Kwansei-around Osaka, and Kyushu - the southern Island) each take up the same topics. These sub groups have now met and discussed.

The Kanto area group gathered fifty teachers from twenty three Christian schools. Some of the significant subjects discussed were:

The Entrance Examinations: This perennial problem has been intensified with the increased competition among students in recent years. The competition is now so severe that the common tendency is to spend the whole of the last years of any school not in general education, but in specific preparation for the entrance examinations





of the next level of education. This, of course, plays havoc with any effort for a well-rounded Christian education. For the reputation of the school, and thus the number and quality of those who seek to enroll, is directly dependant on the percentage of the graduating class that succeeds in passing the entrance examination for the next higher level of schooling.

The suggestion was made that Christian schools give preference to those applicants who have graduated from lower Christian schools. It is hoped that this will relieve some of the pressure on graduating students and enable the schools to focus their attention on well-rounded education and character development.

Christian Character Development: This depends on both the chaplains and the teachers in the school. Unfortunately, because it is so difficult to find qualified Christian teachers, the percentage of Christian teachers varies from 90% to as low as 10%. In view of this, a large responsibility falls on the shoulders of the Christian teachers as well as the chaplains, not only to give their witness to the students but to work among the faculty itself to bring their fellow teachers to Christ. Unfortunately, the position of the chaplains among their fellow teachers is often low. Better qualified and more highly trained Christian leadership is needed.

Other problems discussed included: The development of better coordination and smoother relations between the Christian Primary, Middle, High Schools and Colleges; The curriculum in general, especially than for Christian Education; and The difficulties caused by the reorganization of the educational system under the Allied Occupation.

#### Forty Second Annual Meeting of the Japan Christian Education Association

For the days November 9-11, a hundred and fifty representatives from Christian schools all over Japan met for the official annual meeting of the JCEA. A new chairman, Dr. Junzo Sasaki, was elected. Dr. Sasaki is the President of Saint Paul University (Kikyo Daigaku).

As a result of the discussions, two specific steps were taken which it is hoped will bear fruit. 1). To help improve the level of Christian education and general education in Christian schools, a Christian Education Study Committee will be appointed in each of the four local areas. These groups will deal with the problems on a local level and try to work out specific ways to help specific problems. 2). In view of the fact that the Japanese government Department of Public Education (Mombusho) is making a study preparatory for revising the high school curriculum, the JCEA has appointed representatives to negotiate with them in order to insure the continued distinctively Christian character of the Christian High Schools.





On September 25, in the midst of a raging typhoon, ninety three lay leaders gathered in "Dai Ryu Ji", a great old Buddhist temple in Kobe. These lay leaders from the Central Area around Kobe, Osaka and Kyoto gathered under the instigation and the planning of fellow lay leaders to think together on the theme: "Democracy and the Y.M.C.A." The general trend of their thinking can be grasped from the three sub-topics: a) Democracy and the Individual b) Democratization of the YMCA c) Democratization of Society.

A similar conference was held in the Western Area (around Hiroshima) on October 2 and 3. Although only 33 members attended, this is a pioneering area for the Y.M.C.A. and the enthusiasm of the lay leadership is hopeful for the many small towns in that area.

On October 9-10, sixty people from nine towns around the Tokyo Area gathered in Yokohama to discuss the same theme.

The attendants and the officers at these conferences realized anew the importance of the lay leadership in the Association and laid plans for its cultivation and training.

